

REMARKS

This application has been carefully studied and amended in view of the Office Action dated December 28, 2007. Reconsideration of that action is requested in view of the following.

The claims have been presented with a proper status identifier and in ascending numerical order.

The Abstract has been amended to take into account the objections made in the Office Action.

Claims 15-26 remain in the application . In addition to these claims, however, claims 27-29 have been added to refer to preferable features which had been canceled from claims 16 and 23 as later noted.

It is respectfully submitted that particularly as now amended the claims should comply with 35 USC 112.

Claims 15 and 16 have been amended to refer to pressure in terms of a positive operating step. Thus, claim 15 differs from claim 16 in that claim 15 operates at ambient pressure while claim 16 operates at a pressure of less than 900mbar.

Claims 16 and 23 have been amended to delete the alternative preferred features from those claims. Claims 27 and 28 have been added to recite the preferred features which were previously in and now canceled from claim 23 while claim 29 has been added to recite the feature which has been canceled from claim 16.

The claims have been reviewed and amended to provide proper antecedent support for various claim languages.

Claim 19 has been amended to be dependent on claim 15. Accordingly, it is an alternative to claim 18 and no longer depends on claim 18.

Independent claims 15, 16 and 17 have been amended to point out that the ionic liquid is in the form of “ionic liquid salts which are liquid at temperatures below 200⁰ C”. Support is found at page 2, lines 18 and 24 of the specification.

Claim 23 has been amended to replace the word “close” with “at”. It is to be understood that such amendment is not intended to preclude such as by the application of the doctrine of equivalents a location which is not precisely at the bottom, but could be, for example, near the bottom.

Reconsideration is respectfully requested of the rejection of claim 17 on the grounds of obviousness-type double patenting. As recognized in the rejection claim 17 differs from the corresponding claims of the two co-pending applications. Moreover, none of the claims under consideration in any of these applications has yet been allowed. If the examiner maintains the rejection a terminal disclaimer will be filed.

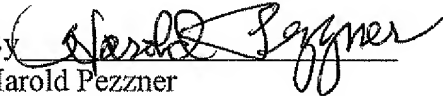
It is respectfully submitted that claims 15-26 and newly added claims 27-29 are not anticipated by or in the alternative obvious over Applicant's Disclosure of Admitted Art as illustrated by WO 02/074718. In that regard, WO 02/074718 does not teach a process, wherein an ionic liquid having a concentration of less than 5% by weight of a high-boiler, obtained by an evaporation step, is subsequently fed to a stripper column. Instead WO 02/074718 teaches to work up the ionic liquid either by an evaporation step or by a stripper column. Thus, the claimed subject-matter of independent claims 15 to 17 is novel in view of the prior art. Furthermore, this measure is a process optimization which has not been rendered obvious by prior art. Using this process optimization, less effort has to be made for working up the bottom stream, the energy required for work up is reduced and an ionic liquid having a high purity is recovered.

The process according to claim 17 further differs from the alternative work up given in WO 02/074718 in that the stripper is supplied with superheated steam comprising the low boiler. This measure is neither taught nor rendered obvious by prior art. Through this measure the use of an inert gas can be avoided and no further components are introduced into the process. Therefore the process according to claim 17 is based on an inventive step.

In view of the above remarks and amendments this application should be passed to issue.

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Respectfully submitted,

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